

LIT4930 – Crime and Mystery Adaptation in Comics (Class #17763), Summer B 2020

Instructor Name: Spencer Chalifour

Course meeting times & locations: MTWRF Period 6, Zoom

Office Location and Hours: Zoom, Tuesday and Thursday Period 5 & by appointment

Course website: Canvas

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Course Description:

After Russ Kick edited three volumes of comic book literary adaptations in *The Graphic Canon* and the single volume of adaptations in *The Graphic Canon of Children's Literature*, the next installment in the series focused on a single genre: crime and mystery. As Kick states in the introduction to the first volume of *The Graphic Canon of Crime & Mystery*, "So many great works deal with crime in some way. The red thread winds through ancient Greek tragedies and biblical tales, Victorian sensation novels and contemporary thrillers." In addition to its deep history, the crime genre is also rife with visual adaptations. From Sherlock Holmes's deerstalker cap to Philip Marlowe's fedora, illustrations, films, and other visualizations of literary works have shaped the popular image of the crime genre.

The medium of comics allows creators to create adaptations that can retain some of the alphabetic text while imbuing the original work not just with new visuals, but a whole new visual vocabulary for conveying the narrative. Adaptations can become more than just retelling a familiar story again, but can fundamentally change the way we envision or understand the adapted work. This effect becomes especially emphasized with adaptations in the crime and mystery genre, where creators do not only consider how to re-tell a familiar or unfamiliar story but also how to convey in another medium the intrigue and suspense the original author creates.

In this class, we will use *The Graphic Canon of Crime & Mystery* as our central selection of comics adaptations while comparing these works to the original narratives, including stories by Franz Kafka, Robert Louis Stevenson, Patricia Highsmith, Agatha Christie, and Arthur Conan Doyle. Through the various reading and writing assignments, we will attempt to answer questions like: How does the process of adaptation affect our understanding of the themes or aesthetic concerns of the original? What new themes emerge from the adaptation? What makes some adaptations more "successful" than others, and how do we measure that success? Does success just mean fidelity to the original, or is this issue more complicated?

Note Regarding COVID-19:

This course will be taught both asynchronously and synchronously via Zoom, with synchronous classes consisting of live lectures, discussions, and writing exercises, and asynchronous classes consisting of either pre-recorded lectures or writing days (see the **Course Schedule** for which days will be asynchronous/synchronous). I have selected this method to retain as much of the discussion component of a traditional face-to-face

literature course as possible while also accounting for the many challenges of teaching in a virtual environment. Links for synchronous class meetings will be emailed to the class listserv at least a day ahead, and you may watch the prerecorded lectures for asynchronous class on your own schedule, as long as you watch them by the end of the day for which they are assigned.

As I am sure many of you are aware, the current COVID-19 epidemic has upended many aspects of our lives, both professionally and personally. I recognize the difficulties of taking a college course at such a time, and I encourage you to communicate with me if you are experiencing any hardships related to COVID-19 so I can provide whatever assistance possible and point you toward any UF resources that can be helpful to you.

Course Goals

In this course, you will

- Critically analyze works in the crime/mystery genre with special attention paid to the tropes, history, and possibilities of this genre
- Demonstrate the perceptual processes involved with viewing a comic page
- Assess the spatial and temporal relations that are at play in comics, especially relating to panel shapes, word balloon placement, page layout, etc.
- Interpret the ideological, historical, and theoretical influences that are at play in different comics adaptations
- Compose analysis papers that utilize the “languages” of comics and the crime/mystery genre

Required Texts:

Please note you're free to purchase print or digital copies of any works that are available digitally online. Any edition of the following works is also acceptable.

The Graphic Canon of Crime & Mystery, Volume 1, ed. Russ Kick, Seven Stories Press. ISBN: 1609807855.

The Hunter: A Parker Novel, Richard Stark (aka Donald Westlake), University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226770990.

Richard Stark's Parker Vol. 1: The Hunter, Darwyn Cooke (adaptation), IDW. ISBN: 1613773994.

City of Glass, Paul Auster, Penguin Books. ISBN: 0140097317.
[also available as part of *The New York Trilogy* one volume edition]

City of Glass: The Graphic Novel, Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli (adaptation), Picador. ISBN: 0312423605.

Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery": The Authorized Adaptation, Miles Hyman (adaptation), Hill and Wang. ISBN: 0809066505

Assignments: (see below for grading rubric)

Narrative Analysis: For this assignment, you will choose one of the works already covered in class and select a short passage and a corresponding single page from its respective adaptation. Keep in mind that the comic adaptation does not need to be a direct adaptation of a scene from the short story/novel; consider how the adaptation examines and adapts a particular theme or mood from the novel. You will then analyze each version, paying particular attention to how the story and its corresponding moods/themes are conveyed in each version. Pay particular close attention to elements like pacing, framing, establishing mood, and rising/falling action and how the "language" of comics is employed by the adapter. This is not a research project, but you may draw from the terminology used in the scholarly readings. (2-3 pages, 150 points)

Adaptation: Following our discussion of "The Witness for the Prosecution" and "Three Blind Mice," you will create a short (one page max) comic adaptation of part (or all) of either of these works. You may create this page using a traditional pen-and-paper approach, or you may create it using computer software. The method of creating images is entirely up to you: drawings, photography, collage, and any other method you want to use is acceptable. You will then write a 1-2 page explanation paper, detailing the choices you made in selecting this excerpt and adapting it to the comics medium. Please note that this assignment is not graded based on your artistic ability, but rather how you choose to put into practice the various elements of visual language discussed during the semester. (1 page adaptation, 1-2 page paper, 250 points)

Researched Position Paper: For this paper, you will analyze a work of crime/mystery fiction and its corresponding graphic adaptation. You may choose from any of the texts from the required readings, or you may choose one of the works from the *Graphic Canon* anthology we didn't cover and its corresponding pre-existing work. You will then create a 5-6 page analysis of the work and its adaptation, being sure to use one or more of the theoretical approaches from the course to frame your reasoning (you may also incorporate additional research from theoretical areas outside the immediate scope of this class, including feminist, Marxist, postcolonial, etc. theory). This project will largely be of your own devising, and it will reflect how you as a scholar are inserting yourself into the academic discussion surrounding adaptation studies. (5-6 pages, 400 points)

Zoom Co-Host: Once during the semester, you will act as a co-host of a class Zoom meeting, and you will collaborate with 1-2 other students and myself on leading class discussion. This assignment will require you to create discussion questions before your meeting and assist me with moderating the chat and class discussion during part of the class meeting time. (50 points)

Discussion posts: Twice during the semester, you will compose a short (250-300 word) discussion post where you reflect on the corresponding readings. These posts are designed less to be analytical, but more reflective of the affective experience of consuming these stories via two different mediums. How did you react to the story differently each time you read it? Did you read the original or the adaptation first, and how did this decision affect your reading experience? If responding to a scholarly work, to what extent do you agree with that work's key arguments? You will also be required to respond to two of your classmates' posts. (250-300 words per post, ~100 words per response. Each post + response worth 25 points, 50 points total)

Participation: Participation includes completing all assigned readings by the dates they are due and contributing to in-class discussion. Participation also includes completing any quizzes, in-class writing activities, and homework assigned during the semester. Because this will be an online class, in-class participation could take the form of spoken contributions to class discussion or written work contributed via the chat and other online forms of engagement. (100 points)

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.

2. *Attendance*:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Attendance is required. The policy is that if a student misses **five** periods, he or she will fail the entire course. If a student misses more than **three** periods during the semester, he or she will lose a letter grade from their class average for each absence after the initial three. The **only** exemptions from this policy are those absences involving university-sponsored events such as athletics and band, religious holidays, and major illnesses that are documented. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. If you have to leave class early, it will result in a half absence, barring extenuating circumstances.

Please Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Tardiness: If students enter class after roll call, they are late, which disrupts the entire class. Two instances of tardiness count as one absence. If you arrive after roll has been called, you must see me after class so I know you attended.

3. *Paper Format & Submission*: All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to E-learning/Canvas. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered.

4. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class or on-line at the assigned deadline. Late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Grade Appeals*. Students who wish to make a grade appeal should contact Dr. Kenneth Kidd, the Associate Chair and Undergraduate Advisor (kbkidd@ufl.edu). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.
13. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
14. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

Tentative Schedule

(Please note readings are due on the day they are listed, and the schedule is subject to change; also, all readings not listed under the "Required Readings" list will be made available via Canvas. All Tuesday and Thursday classes will be taught

asynchronously, as indicated by the gray highlighting on the schedule; all other classes will be synchronous):

Wk	Day	Reading	Due
		<i>Unit 1: Introductions</i>	
1	M 7/6	Introduction + syllabus overview	
	T 7/7 asynchronous	Excerpt from <i>Understanding Comics</i> (McCloud); “How to Read Nancy” (Newgarden and Karasik)	
	W 7/8	Discussion: Why retell stories? Watch “‘Storytelling for Comics’ by David Mazzucchelli”; “Jesus and the Adulteress” from the Gospel of John and adaptation by Roberta Gregory	
	R 7/9 asynchronous	“The Reign of Adaptation” (Naremore)	
	F 7/10	“The Murderer’s Wine” (Baudelaire) and adaptation by Alex Eckman-Lawn; “A Fratricide” (Kafka) and adaptation by Peter Kuper	
		<i>Unit 2: Crime</i>	
2	M 7/13	“Two Gallants” (Joyce) and adaptation by Robert Berry	
	T 7/14 asynchronous	“A Taste for Murder: The Curious Case of Crime Fiction” (Franks)	
	W 7/15	<i>Strangers on a Train</i> (Highsmith; excerpt) and adaptation by Megan Kelso	
	R 7/16 asynchronous	Writing Day	
	F 7/17	Discussion: The “Look” of Crime	Narrative Analysis Due
3	M 7/20	“Witness for the Prosecution” and “Three Blind Mice” (Christie) and “When Page Won’t Go to Stage” (Marie)	
	T 7/21 asynchronous	<i>The Hunter</i> (Stark), Parts One and Two	
	W 7/22	<i>The Hunter</i> (Stark), Part Three	
	R 7/23 asynchronous	“Far from Home and Near to Far” (Phipps); <i>The Hunter</i> (Stark) Part Four; <i>The Hunter</i> (Cooke), Book One	
	F 7/24	<i>The Hunter</i> (Cooke), Books Two, Three, and Four	Have first discussion post completed by this date

		<i>Unit 3: Detection</i>	
4	M 7/27	"The Three Apples" (anonymous – <i>Arabian Nights</i>) and adaptation by Glynnis Fawkes In-Class Adaptation Workshop	
	T 7/28 asynchronous	"Detective Fiction and the Aesthetic of Crime" (Harpham)	
	W 7/29	"The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (Doyle) and adaptation by Suzy Kim and Patrick Gabrielli	
	R 7/30 asynchronous	Writing Day	
	F 7/31	"Talma Gordon" (Hopkins) and adaptation by C. Frakes Discussion: Visualizing Detection	Adaptation Due
5	M 8/3	<i>City of Glass</i> (Auster) ch. 1-6	
	T 8/4 asynchronous	<i>City of Glass</i> (Auster) ch. 7-13	
	W 8/5	<i>City of Glass</i> (Karasik and Mazzucchelli) pp. 1-85	
	R 8/6 asynchronous	<i>City of Glass</i> (Karasik and Mazzucchelli) pp. 86-138; "Cohesion in Comics and Graphic Novels" (Tseng and Bateman)	Have second discussion post completed by this date
		<i>Unit 4: Judgment and Punishment</i>	
	F 8/7	"The Lottery" (Jackson)	
6	M 8/10	<i>The Lottery</i> (Hyman)	
	T 8/11 asynchronous	"Takasebune" (Ogai) and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (Wilde)	
	W 8/12	Adaptation of "Takasebune" and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" by Caroline Picard	
	R 8/13 asynchronous	Writing Day	Researched Position Paper Due
	F 8/14	Reflection on class, course evaluation, and last day celebration	

Grading Scale

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699

B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

A = An "A" student consistently shows outstanding scholarship and initiative exceeding the assignments (using creativity, outside research, etc.), makes contributions to discussions, and is punctual and regular in attendance.

B = A "B" student demonstrates excellent scholarship and shows some initiative in assignments, is effective in regular participation and completes all work by the assigned date, and work submitted shows that instructions have been followed completely.

C = A "C" student has a cooperative attitude toward class work and demonstrates an adequate grasp of the subject matter, all assigned work is completed in a satisfactory manner, instructions are generally followed well, and assignments generally turned in on time.

D = A "D" student provides an often unsatisfactory effort toward class work, assignments are barely met and turned in late, instructions are poorly followed, and there is little or no constructive participation in group or class discussions.

Assessment Rubric

Each paper will have its own individual rubric, but here is a sample of the common writing qualities I will be looking for across all your work:

Content: Papers exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.

Organization: Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.

Argument and Support: Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.

Style: Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical structure.

Mechanics: Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument or points.